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NEW ADAPTATION OF AN ENEMY OF THE PEOPLE COMING TO UVA DRAMA

OPENING NOVEMBER 14 AT THE RUTH CAPLIN THEATER

CHARLOTTESVILLE, VA— November 1, 2013—U.Va. Drama Associate Professor and playwright L. Douglas Grissom’s adaptation of Henrik Ibsen’s, *An Enemy of the People* takes audiences behind closed doors to witness a disastrous clash between idealism and pragmatism, loyalty and self-preservation in a small town. The U.Va. Department of Drama production explores what happens when one man makes a disturbing discovery and everyone in Kittery, Maine must confront their secrets and choose where they stand in the conflict between prosperity and truth.

An Enemy of the People, directed by Richard Warner, will be presented in the Ruth Caplin Theatre November 14-16 and November 19-23.

Ticket prices for *An Enemy of the People* are \$14 for adults, \$12 for seniors and U.Va. faculty, staff and alumni association members and \$8 for students. Tickets are available online at www.artsboxoffice.virginia.edu, by calling 434-924-3376 or in-person from noon until 5:00 p.m. Monday through Friday at the U.Va. Arts Box Office, located in the lobby of the U.Va. Drama building

Grissom’s adaptation brings Ibsen close to home for American audiences by moving the play from 1880s Norway to 1960s Maine, and the brooding revolution of the early 60s clearly underscores the conflict between innovation and establishment in the play. Grissom also chose to recast the two newspaper editors as women, sharpening the edge of gender politics in the play. For Grissom, “The initial motivation was purely to give more women in the department a chance to be in the play. But I’ve found it gives the play much more texture and color. “

The adaptation began last year when Warner approached Grissom about the project and continued after the show was cast in April. Warner notes that, “Doug has been with us as we rehearsed so the actors can ask him questions every night about the script and their characters. This has allowed all of us to create the many specific behaviors and verbal inflections that make his nuanced script come to life.” On the same note Grissom explains that his “favorite thing is simply to watch the actors embody the characters and speak the language that I wrote. Beyond that, getting feedback from the actors as to what’s working or not, and questions they may have – and then having the freedom to change things that aren’t working.”

An Enemy of the People is a complex play: intensely serious, but also a work that Ibsen called his “comedy”. Grissom believes that, “people rarely realize how funny Ibsen is – he almost always has at least one character who is, in a word, goofy. By that I mean, full of themselves, pretentious and yet befuddled. I’ve tried to bring out the humor in the play, but I’m only amplifying what is already there.” Warner notes that he enjoys “directing Ibsen for a number of reasons. First, taking on the challenge of

bringing his characters to life. They are all complex and three-dimensional. Then there's creating the staging for the stories he tells, all searingly honest and intricate.”

An Enemy of the People occupies an interesting place in the Ibsen cannon; according to Warner, “Many Ibsen scholars will tell you that *Enemy* is not one of Ibsen's best efforts and that he wrote it as an angry, impulsive response to the brutal criticism of his *Ghosts*. Now having really studied the play, collaborated with a colleague on a modern adaptation and worked the scenes with actors, I am convinced that it is a hidden masterpiece. Doug Grissom's adaptation has streamlined the original text, heightened the action and highlighted the humor.” For Warner, “One of the central questions of the work is, ‘Where does man’s fundamental responsibility lie... with his family or his community?’ It's a question that is just as pertinent today in America as it was in Ibsen's Norway.”

Free parking for all U.Va. Drama performances is available at the Culbreth Road Parking Garage, conveniently located alongside the Drama Building.

To access a photo of the production, visit <https://virginia.box.com/s/lbmb259idiq4lzhr85s4>

For more information on the 2013-2014 U.Va. Department of Drama season, visit us online at www.virginia.edu/drama.